

§ 10. Doctrine of Man

Lecture 18

Putting It All Together

Good morning! Welcome to Defenders. We're glad that you could join us this morning. Today we want to summarize the results of our study of the historical Adam and then reflect on those conclusions.

On the basis of a detailed genre analysis of Genesis 1-11, we concluded that it's plausible to regard these chapters as a Hebrew mytho-history which serves as a universal, foundational charter for the nation and identity of Israel over against her neighbors.

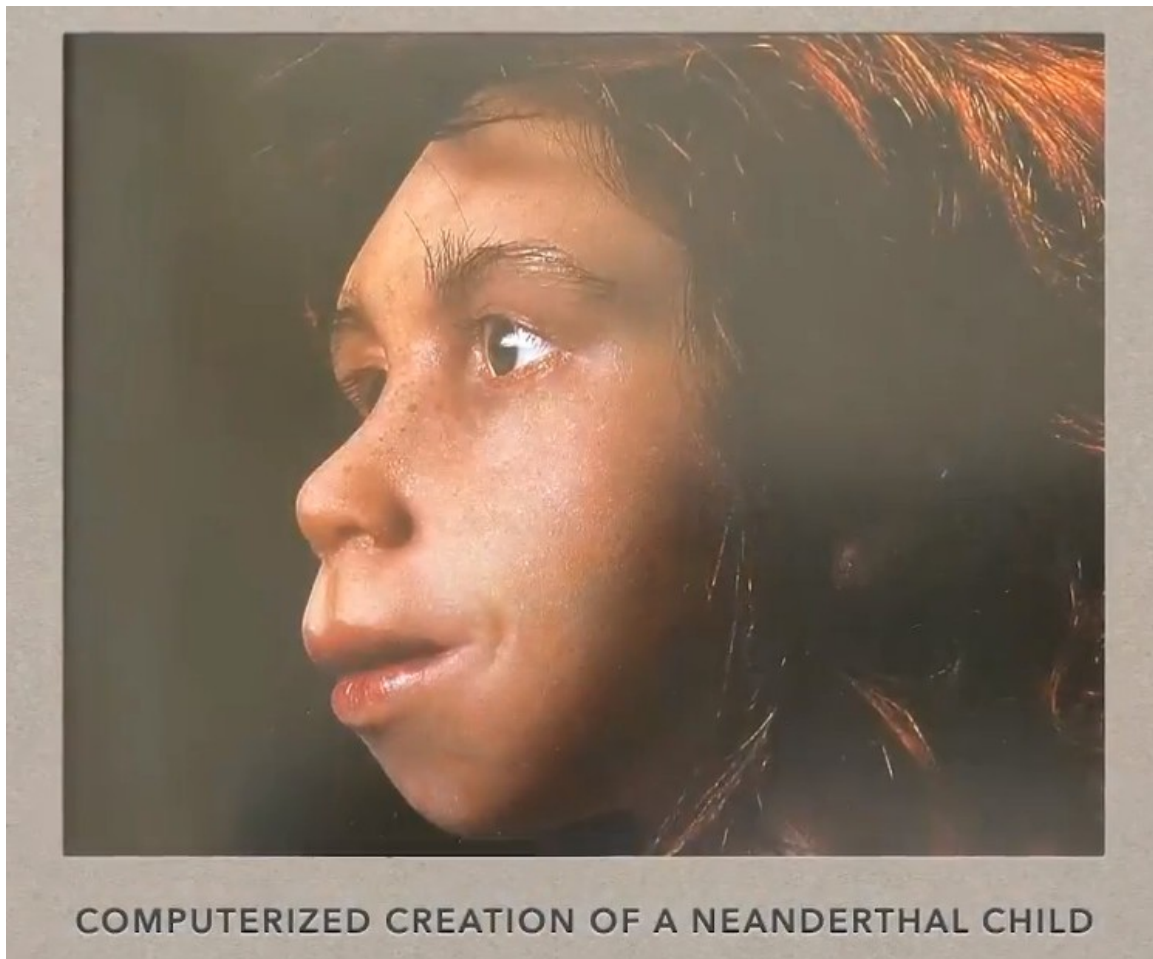
While these narratives need not be read as literal history, the ordering presence of genealogies terminating in persons who were indisputably taken to be historical as well as the teaching of Paul in the New Testament about Adam, which bursts the bounds of a purely literary figure, oblige the biblical Christian to affirm the historicity of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve should be affirmed to be the fount of all humanity, the genealogical ancestors of every human being who has ever lived on the face of this planet.

A review of the scientific evidence concerning the time of human origins reveals that, based on widely accepted criteria for human cognitive capacity, human beings ought not to be identified with *Homo sapiens* alone but ought also to include Neanderthals as well. Given that all human beings are descendants of a founding couple, Adam and Eve may be plausibly identified as belonging to the last common ancestor of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, usually denominated *Homo heidelbergensis* (Heidelberg Man). Such an identification is fully consonant with the data of population genetics, which does not rule out the existence of two, heterozygous, sole genetic progenitors of the human race earlier than 500,000 years ago. In this final section we want to reflect upon the ramifications of such an identification.

Given the doctrine of physical, bodily, eschatological (or "end-time") resurrection of the dead, it would be disconcerting if Adam and Eve were so different from us that they and their immediate descendants would be physically repugnant to the vast majority of the risen saints. Fortunately, Heidelberg Man was not some sort of hybrid ape-man but was recognizably human. Indeed, as we have seen, *Homo antecessor*, a sister species of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals, had a remarkably modern facial morphology, suggesting that the modern face is deeply rooted in human evolutionary history. The morphological differences between Neanderthals and modern humans, including the large Neanderthal nose, may well be, in the opinion of many palaeoanthropologists, the result of their adaption to Ice Age climates and so not ancestral characteristics.

Palaeoanthropologists have said that "if a Neanderthal were seen today dressed in a three-piece suit and boarding a subway train in New York, he would not have attracted undue

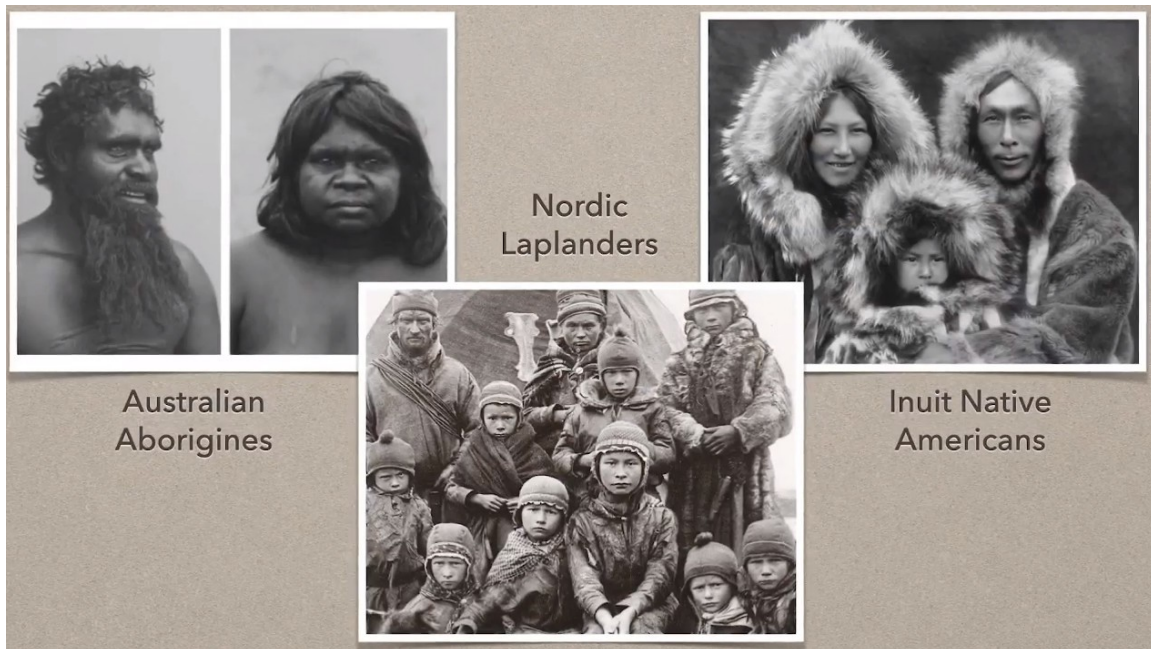
attention.”¹ Presumably this is not a commentary on the indifference of New Yorkers! Here is a slide of a three-dimensional reconstruction of the head of a Neanderthal girl based upon fossil remains.



Could anyone, looking at this reconstruction, deny that this is a human little girl? Certainly, her facial features might differ somewhat from ours, but could anyone deny that this is a human child? A child who had a brain capacity comparable to ours today, and whose parents had a cognitive capacity that exhibited modern human behaviors.

When one thinks of the diversity within our contemporary human population, from Australian aborigines to Nordic Laplanders to Inuit Native Americans, then including archaic humans within the human family is not so radical a step.

¹ James P. Hurd, “Hominids in the Garden,” *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, ed. Keith B. Miller (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), p. 217.



We in the West have a deeply inherited tendency to think of Adam and Eve as European Caucasians, which is nothing more than a cultural and racial prejudice.



Adam & Eve, Michaelangelo Buonarotti, Sistine Chapel Ceiling



If we can get used to the thought that Adam and Eve may have resembled African Bushmen more than white people, then surely we can get used to the idea that Adam and Eve looked like Heidelberg Man rather than us.



Indeed, I can imagine that in the eschaton Neanderthals and other archaic humans might be the subjects of special regard: “You were there near the beginning, weren’t you? Tell me what was it like!”

The thought that Neanderthals and other archaic humans might share with us Christians the eschatological state of “the new heavens and the new earth” brings the startling realization that as members of the human family, Neanderthals, Denisovans, and others were, like us, people whom God loves and for whom Christ died. Paul describes how God “overlooked the times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30) and “passed over former sins” committed prior to Christ’s advent (Romans 3:25). Christ’s death atoned for the sins of past humanity all the way back to Adam’s sin. Unless one embraces the doctrine of limited atonement, Christ’s atoning death must therefore have encompassed the sins of these archaic humans. This realization raises the difficult question of the accessibility of salvation for those who, like Job, lived outside the Old Testament covenant with Israel; but any solution to that problem, such as appeal to God’s general revelation in nature and

conscience, can be applied equally to Neanderthals and other archaic humans. We may well see some of them therefore in “heaven,” and I think that we’ll be delighted to do so.

If Adam and Eve were the ancestors of Neanderthals and other archaic humans, then it follows that they, like Adam and Eve, are in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic moral value and share in man’s vocation. But what of Adam and Eve’s contemporaries who were not their descendants? On an evolutionary scenario, Adam and Eve emerged from a wider population of hominins. Since Adam and Eve are the fount of all humanity, it follows necessarily that Adam and Eve’s contemporaries were not human and therefore not in the image of God, since to be human is to be in God’s image. No other earthly creature than man, according to the account in Genesis 1, has been created in God’s image and likeness. Thus, Adam and Eve’s contemporaries who were not their descendants were neither human nor in God’s image.

The radical transition effected in the founding pair that lifted them to the human level plausibly involved both biological and spiritual renovation, perhaps divinely caused. Biologically, we may envision a regulatory mutation that radically increased the cognitive capacity of the brain beyond what other hominins enjoy. Such a transformation could equip the organism with the neurological structure to support a rational soul. Thus, God’s creation of Adam and Eve plausibly required both biological and spiritual renovations, biological to equip their brains with the capacity to serve as the instruments of rational thought and spiritual to furnish them with rational souls different from any sort of soul that non-human animals might be thought to possess. Thus, Adam and Eve were something radically new.

How would Adam and Eve consort, then, with their non-human contemporaries? We can plausibly conjecture that as bearers of a modern human consciousness and linguistic capacity, Adam and Eve would increasingly feel themselves at something of a distance from their non-human contemporaries and, as their descendants multiplied, their tribe would be naturally inclined to increasingly self-isolate. If there were sexual encounters with non-human hominins, these would be cases of bestiality, contrary to God’s will for humanity, though not entirely surprising for a fallen race. Eventually, as Adam and Eve’s descendants superseded the other hominin species, the possibility of such liaisons disappear.

So we may envision an initial population of several thousand hominins, animals which are in some respects like human beings, but which lack the capacity for rational thought. Out of this population, God selects two and furnishes them with intellects by renovating their brains and endowing them with rational souls. Only they are therefore truly human. At some point they become aware of God’s moral requirements, which renders them responsible moral agents. Unfortunately, they misuse their free will by choosing to

commit a sin (the original sin), thereby becoming morally guilty before God and alienating themselves from God, though not from God's offer of love and forgiveness. They thereby introduce spiritual, though not physical, death into the human race, for we saw from 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5 that Adam was created physically mortal like other biological organisms, but was the gateway through which spiritual death and condemnation entered the human race.

We might think it unfair of God not to extend to Adam and Eve's contemporaries the same opportunity of a relationship with God that he bestowed upon Adam and Eve. But Kenneth Kemp effectively exposes the flaw in such reasoning, asking,

would it not have been unjust of God to give to Adam and Eve the gift of a rational soul, a gift which would make them fully human. . . , with the additional prospect of eternal happiness with God in Heaven, while leaving in an animal state their siblings and cousins. . . ? I think not. . . . God did not owe Adam and Eve's cousins a rational and therefore immortal soul. Indeed the very idea that God owes an intellectual soul to those cousins risks incoherence—how could God owe it to some being to make it not exist and to make another being exist in its place?²

Kemp's retort is doubly correct if there was a biological difference between Adam and his progenitors, for there is nothing unjust about treating animals as animals. It is no more inconsistent with God's nature to treat *Homo erectus* as *Homo erectus* than to treat a pelican as a pelican or an elephant as an elephant or a chimpanzee as a chimpanzee.

What I have proposed is just one view of human origins. I'm not even claiming that it is the best alternative. But if it is a plausible alternative, as I maintain, it suffices to show that there is no incompatibility between the existence of an historical Adam and contemporary science concerning human origins.³

² Kenneth W. Kemp, "Science, Theology, and Monogenesis," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85/2 [2011]: 233.

³ ?Total Running Time: 16:15 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)